CHAPTER-X

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION
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In the preceding chapters a comprehensive analysis has been made on the growth of Tribal resentment in Assam with special reference to the Bodos, causes of the Bodoland Movement and the devices worked out for solution of the problem. The whole study shows that the Bodoland Movement is the product, basically of the following factors :-

(a) Caste-Hindu Assamese Chauvinism,
(b) The arrogant and biased role of the State,
(c) The emergence of power aspirant Bodo Middle-Class.

With the above another important factor may be added to result of the above study :-

(d) Ethnic conciousness among the Tribals and resultant feeling of identity crisis among the Bodos.

Besides, the micro study of the movement suggests that the accumulated Tribal resentment over the years had helped the elite class to explode the situation. Here the middle class is playing the role of a catalyst, as it had been argued by Dr. Hiren Gohain. Centuries of deprivation, maltreatment and disparagement made the Bodos conscious about the crisis of identity.

In the pre-Colonial period, most of the Tribals of the North-East were not conscious of their ethnic identities and their world confined to their family, clan and villages. The issues of nationality, ethnicity and cultural identity assumed multi-dimensional significance only in the post-Colonial period. All these arose in view of the urgent need for economic, social, cultural and political development in the North-East region. It
came to be realized that regional economic development can be sustained only on rational policy forms and strategies for achievement of the goal of overall development of nationalities conscious of their distinct identities. There is no simple mechanical solution to the problems of national integrity for peace, prosperity and development. The problems of national formation should be viewed with proper perspectives and the question of nationality, ethnicity and cultural identity should be scientifically analyzed.

The first sociological process had been to develop an ethno-Tribal identity which was acquired in the phase of Colonial Administration. Different cultural-linguistic groups want to maintain their tradition and relative prestige while desiring to improve their economic, social and political status. All these issues involve competition, conflict and power struggle.

The Bodos form the largest Tribal group in the North-East India. Being scattered in half a dozen countries world over, the Bodos would like to maintain their distinct identity. For that, the Bodos have been craving for a separate plot of land which they can claim as their own and where they can flourish to their own merit and genius. So as to be able to make the people of world know about their existence with own land and place for existence they would like to call it as "BODOLAND".

Not quite a few Assamese vocals tried to shift the attention of the media and the people of India by providing misleading informations regarding the Bodo people and their history. An enlightened editor of an Assamese journal put forward his comment on the ongoing Bodoland Movement in the following words :-

"The Bodo Tribals of Assam are not the Kacharis who are indigenous to the region and recognized as a Scheduled Tribe. The Bodo
was not a distinct tribe claiming recognition when the Constitution was drafted. Nor was the Bodo listed in the Constitution (Scheduled Tribe) Orde, 1950. It is believed until recently that the “Boro-Kacharis” (if they had any affinity with the agitating “Bodo” tribals) were demanding an Udayachal on the north bank of the Brahmaputra in Assam. There is a distinct tribe called “Kachari” including Sonowal as also Mech and Rabha who were treated as belonging to the same group.

But the agitators deny being Kacharis. They say they are “Bodos”, a separate tribe with a population of four million. But history does not lend support to their claim, nor the Census which enumerated them as being about one sixth of that number.

History says that there was a tribe named “Bodo” in Mongolia. A section of them migrated to Tibbet. Traces of Bodo tribe are still discernible in Tibbet. Some 600 years ago, they migrated south through the Nathu La Pass on the Sikkim-Tibbet border. They were mixed with Sikkimese and Nepalese, but never of such a formidable number as to get recognition as a race.

Since the demand for a Bodoland in the area claimed by the Chinese is an absurd proposition, the locals oppose it tooth and nail.

Mr. Hiracharan Narzinary protested twisting the fact of history by saying, “I pity on Mr. Sinha for his ignorance of of the Bodos. I would advise him not to make such a statement in near future without having authority on the subject. Sarat Chandra Sinha was Chief Minister of Assam, who is a Rajbongshi from Goalpara district. Rajbongshis in Assam falls under “Other Backward Classes” category and are ethnically akin to the Bodo Kacharis [S.K.Chaube, Hills Politics in North-ast India, 1973].
The newly emerging ethnic middle class certainly wants political power for themselves. But they have been able to mobilize popular support because ordinary masses of such ethnic group have been deprived and cheated on all fronts. Their economic flight is grave, and culturally they are discriminated against. Here the new ethnic middle class has little to gain their support.

Right since 1967, when on 13\textsuperscript{th} February, 1967 the then Prime Minister Smt. Indira Gandhi announced before a Mizo delegation that Assam would be reorganized on federal basis the Bodos have been aspiring for a separate State of their own. The Bodo people took the initiatives for forming the Plains Tribals council of Assam (PTCA) as the political platform and put forward their demand for regional autonomy. The demand, in course of time, was elevated from regional autonomy to Union Territoty, and later to a full-fledged State under the Indian Union. The movement for a separate political arrangement was carried forward for long two and half a decade as a result of which two accords have been concluded giving Bodoland Autonomous Council and Bodoland Territorial Council subsequently.

The course of the movement had shown that power factor remained the central issue to the leadership in their involvement in a war against the State as well as against the Assame\-\-\-\-e Chauvinism. This has given birth to a class of opportunist leadership, who after carving a niche for themselves through their involvement in the movement and with the support of the masses did not hesitate compromise and to bargain for power with that class and State against whom they declared war. The lack of strong ideological commitment and visionary leadership along with the manipulative act of the State contributed towards this
degradation. The gradual decline of the mass movement (however, might be for the time being), also has to be located within these developments.

The Bodoland Autonomous Council formed through the 1993 Accord fell far short to the expectations of the Bodo people. The autonomy concept very soon met with utter failure to meet the aspirations of the Bodo people agitating for a separate political arrangement. In less than two years the BAC was rejected by the Bodo people and they resumed the movement for a separate State. The renewed struggle continued for about a decade in between which period the armed revolutionary organization Bodo Liberation Tiger (BLT) got the reign of movement since its inception in 1996. The Centre was able to bring the BLT to negotiation table in 2000 A.D. and long three years parley could evolve the idea of territorial autonomy for the Bodos. To suit the conditions of the Tribals in Assam plains, the Centre had agreed to effect amendment to the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution originally meant for the Hill Tribes of Assam. The concept of territorial autonomy to the Bodos in Assam plains has evolved the present political set up called by name Bodoland Territorial Council.

The developments that have taken place during the post-Autonomy period have established the fact that the given autonomy has hardly contributed towards the solution of the Tribal resentment. One important factor for this failure is the lack of good will on the part of the State. It has been pointed out that –

"The recent accord in Assam between the State Government and various ethnic groups have been prepared and signed in order to ensure the security and stability of the Hiteswar Saikia Government rather than safeguarding the interests of the ethnic groups."

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Seen in the light of the above, present BTC can certainly be termed as an aberration in the Constitutional provision of the country. Going by the famous dictum that “Time changes, so changes the Society” and “With changes in time, the attitude, aptitude and needs of the society also undergo changes” the present BTC has been moulded in such a way that it can sustain the changed time though it amounted a mischief to the longstanding hopes and aspiration of the Bodo people and what more, to the Constitution of the country itself.

The power politics of the State Government is explicit in its approach towards the Bodo leadership. Immediately after conclusion of the Bodo Accord in 1993, Chief Minister Giteswar Saikia had signed an agreement of electoral alliance with the newly formed Bodoland People’s Party (BPP) led by S.K.Bwiswmuthiary. When BPP was divided and Premising Brahma formed the new faction BPP(P), immediately Saikia signed an another agreement with Mr. Brahma, discarding the first one. Later on Mr. Brahma was nominated as the Chief Executive Member of BEC after S.K.Bwiswmuthiary had submitted his resignation. But the Government did not take interest in transferring the powers, as envisaged in the Bodo Accord.

A free and frank comment on the notion that BTC is an improvement upon the earlier BAC disclose the fact that the truth is otherwise. It is evident from the fact that in the earlier BAC, maintaining the basic concept of autonomy to the Tribals in Assam no pronounced rights over land and property were given to the non-Tribals. Thus, though in uncertain terms, the Bodos could hope at least to enjoy meaningful autonomy over the land allotted to them. But the present BTC has mitigated to land the very concept of Tribal autonomy by giving
pronounced rights to non-Tribals at par with the Tribals living within this autonomous area. Right since the beginning of the parleys on BTC impression gained momentum that the proposed BTC is meant for Bodos only, and the media also continued reporting in this line. But the text of the Accord and subsequent amendment to the existing Sixth Schedule of the Constitution bellies this as the term “Bodo” has been substituted by the word “Tribal” and it has left enough lacunae for revival of the demand for separate State and disturbance to arise in near future. The same is confirmed by comment on newly created BTC by Mr. Hagrama Mahilary, Chairman cum C-in-C of the erstwhile BLT and signatory of the Accord on BTC just after signing the accord that “The Bodoland area may hope not to witness dissatisfaction at least for next twenty years”. Mr. Sansuma Khunggur Bwiswmuthiary, the then President of the ABSU commented right after conclusion of the Bodo Accord in 1993 that “It is foundation towards the achievement of a separate Bodoland State” and the subsequent period has seen continuation of the movement for separate State which resulted in the creation of the improved type in BTC which demand due attention from the political pundits. Just one consolation may be derived from the creation of BTC that the rights given to the Bodos have been Constitutionalized which may help the Bodos to attain a national identity. This only may be termed as the improvement upon the earlier BTC by the present BTC.

Bodo political analysts have expressed fear that to the tension ridden Assam has come another dangerous trend of violence and politics of annihilation. Nobody knows where this will lead the people of this region. They put the question – What is the way out of this situation? should we allow the situation to drift this way leading to a bloody civil
war? Should we not put our heads together to reverse the trend and
generate an atmosphere of mutual trust and co-operation? They put
forward their own solution towards this end as follows:

"The majority Assamese community should realize that salvation
of Assamese society lies not on imposition of Assamese culture and
language on unwilling communities but lies on forging unity with all
ethnic and linguistic groups of the state, based on equality and mutual
respect." But it is sorrowful to note that such a humble desire on the part
of the Bodo people and leaders alike have never been respected by the
Assamese people and the Assam Government. Yet the Bodo intelligentsia
believed that "this is possible only in the language of learned Professor
V. Venkata Rao, by adopting the principle of federalism. The
administrative arrangement of Assam must radically change on the basis
of federalism providing each ethnic group the fullest power and scope to
preserve their areas, ethnic identity and develop according to their own
genius and tradition. This alone will promote mutual trust and unity among
different groups of people and enable them to fight unitedly against the
odds of the history. If one fails to do this the ethnic conflict will shatter
all of us giving opportunity to more shrewd and pragmatic people to
swamp us, and rule over us. So let us follow the principle of "Live and
Let Live." One will get astonished to see how humble and simple was
their understanding and approach towards the problem which the ruling
Assamese clique did not bother to heed at the right time. One can expect
had these desires and approach of the Bodos were respected at that time,
situation would not have turned so grave to the extent it is found today.

The alleged Caste-Hindu Assamese Chauvinism, against whom
the movement was fought, remains unresolved. Even the Accords seem
to be counter productive in this regard. Chauvinism is likely to be more intensified as the settlement has been rammed down the throat of the Cast-Hindu Assamese. They have not been persuaded by a democratic campaign of propaganda. Besides, the ethnic middle class is also chauvinistic. Their treatment towards the Assamese in the autonomous area may further influence chauvinism in Assam.

All these developments present a dark future of the ethnic situation in Assam. The initial act of bad faith is bound to lead to other undesirable consequences. The details of the Government claimed settlement have been worked out without any thought. The present violent assertion of militant nationalism of Bodos and the fear-psychosis of non-Tribals in the Tribal dominated areas are threat to the unity and integrity as well as for peaceful living in the State. So a democratic and convincing formula is to be worked out. The good faith is to be ensured between the Tribal and non-Tribal people of the State. Here in this context the following approach can be suggested as a noble and workable one:

There ought to be a commission of Assamese and other ethnic people constituted with leading jurists, political scientists, economists, to go into all aspects of the question. They ought to sift the facts carefully, taking evidence from all sections of the society.

Next, the package deal prepared by them should be put to a referendum in the State.

Thirdly, the package is to be subject of legislation in the State Assembly. In this way, all suspicions shall be removed, and the settlement will be effective.

The above proposition is very good in its first look. But experience has shown that the constitution, working and formulae worked out by
such an approach have never proved fruitful, many for their own shortcomings in practical ground or due lack of will on the part of Government to implement such recommendations however valuable those formulae might have been. The 3-Member Expert Committee was suggestive of the line recommendations of which turned out meaningless in the face of practical utility.

On the other hand there had been suggestions for village based self-government for the Tribals in Assam. Dr. Dhrubajyoti Borah suggests that each Tribal village should be taken as the lowest unit of administration and should be given executive control over the people, property and resources – roads, forest, river, market etc. The village units of each Tribe together will form the highest single political unit with workable political power in the sphere of economic development, social progress, linguistic matters etc. It should be also entrusted with necessary power ranging from planning to distribution of common resources. By taking the villages as the unit, various segments of different Tribal communities, living in different districts of Assam can be brought under the single political and administrative unit of respective communities. For such a system there is no need to have geographical contiguity among the areas. In this way, without indulging in traditional issues like demand for separate district or State – the aspirations of all Tribal community for self – government and self administration can be achieved.

However, autonomy without physical boundary has its own limitations. As the theoretical framework suggests, the power aspiration of the newly emerged middle class is instrumental to the ethnic uprising. The recently granted autonomy to the Rabhas, Tiwas and Mishings without physical boundary could not bring any solution to those discontented ethnic communities. Besides, this is bound to create problem in respect
of villages with mixed community and where two or more communities have near equal population.

There remains yet one more crucial issue to be handled carefully. The granting of autonomy to a specific community has, at least, two implication:

1. It may bring solution to a problem, and
2. It may also intensify their strength that may result in further disintegration of the State.

So, provisions should be made for co-opting aspirant Tribal leaders in the overall State-structure.

A few political analysts suggest for district based autonomy for solution to Tribal demands for self-rule. One suggests that the essential elements of the Sixth Schedule should be applied in case of Kokrajhar district and Dhemaji Sub-Division. An analysis of the course of the Bodoland Movement has shown, the most sensitive issue that the Tribal leaders have raised and around which the people have been mobilised, is cultural domination. So, now at the time of crisis, besides the political and economic package, the emphasis should be given on ensuring the confidence of the Tribal people upon the greater Assamese society. The following steps may be suggested as conducive in this regard:

a) Giving priority to exhibition and publicity of Tribal culture in the Government controlled media as well as other leading Assamese media,

b) The exchange of cultural troupes, comprising of both Tribal and non-Tribal elements, between Tribal and non-Tribal areas,

© Inspiring non-Tribal students and people to work for the progress of Tribal people and their culture and literature, both by Governmental and non-Governmental organizations.
The above is a good suggestion and it can be expected that with so many shortcomings these steps are bound to bring amity and better understanding among the Tribals and mainstream Assamese society though not to the extent of giving lasting solution to the political problems.

To sum up his study on recent Tribal upsurge in Assam and the issue of autonomy, Akhil Ranjan Dutta opines that final solution to a problem requires the well-acquaintance with its multi-dimensionality, its inter-relationship with other societal factors, the genuine eagerness on the part of the concerned authorities and the optimum faith of the people concerned in whose socio-cultural context the problem has its roots. To be simple, a problem needs simultaneous efforts on all these fronts. Despite the Government packages and authoritative checks, the reoccurrence of movement at intervals and the lack of faith on the part of the Bodo people, substantiate the above argument. One can not discard the Bodo problem only as a political problem, whose solution lies in some political and economic packages. But when such a political problem is related to the unity and integrity of the State, then the solution demands creation of an atmosphere of good faith, open interaction at all levels and a concrete programme for removal of socio-cultural dissatisfaction.

The above constitutes the basic needs for a suitable approach to the burning Bodoland problem. Given in the present context, granting of territorial autonomy reverting from ethnic autonomy is a satisfactory step on the part of the Governments in the Centre and the State, lest the agitating Bodo people shall be facilitated to learn working of a territorial government system so as to make them ripe for running a full-fledged State government. Of course, with passing time, the Bodo aspiration and demand for separate State seems inevitable to be intensified and provision of an Autonomous State under Article 244 (A) may prove to be ultimate solution to the problem.